

Anton Wulff House
107 King William Street
San Antonio, Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-3149

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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ANTON WULFF HOUSE

San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

ADDRESS: 107 King William Street
OWNER: Roy Akers Enterprises
OCCUPANT: Vacant
USE: None

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Anton Wulff family was among early emigrants to the Republic of Texas and prospered in merchandizing business. The family joined other affluent German families who constructed homes on King William Street ca. 1870. The house is architecturally significant as a three story Victorian house with characteristics reminiscent of the "Italian Villa".

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Anton Friedrich Wulff was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1822, and emigrated to Texas in the 1840's. In 1852, he married Paulita Guadalupe Olivarri, a Canary Islander. Seven of their nine children grew to maturity. Mr. Wulff engaged in merchandising on Military Plaza, and soon established an extensive trade with Mexico. During the Civil War, he moved to Ojinaga, Mexico, but soon he sent his family to Germany for greater safety.

He returned to San Antonio after the War, and his family returned from Germany. In 1870, construction of the house at 107 King William Street was begun on $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land backing up to the San Antonio River. The house became known as "Wulff's Castle", and was a gathering

place for out-of-town artists and writers. A boathouse and a horizontal board wood fence originally graced the premises.

Mr. Wulff was civic minded, and is remembered as the founder of the San Antonio park system. He served as alderman, mayor pro-tem and was one of the original organizers of the Casino Association and the German-English School.

Mr. Wulff died in 1894, leaving his house and property to his widow. In 1902, the house was sold to Arthur Guenther and his wife, Lischen Groos Guenther. The Guenther family occupied the house until 1949. In 1950, the sons of Arthur Guenther, Hilmar and Ernst Otto, sold the house to F. G. Antonio and wife, Kathryn M. Antonio. The Antonios converted the house into four apartment units which were rented until 1961, when the house was sold to Roy Akers, Funeral Director. Akers' plans to convert the premises or to construct a new Funeral Home were upset by zoning restrictions and the house is now for sale by Akers Enterprises.

Alterations and Additions: Old pictures owned by Miss Tyrrasch, a grand-daughter, show that the porch at tower entrance was added later, but the similarity in treatment to main front porch indicates that this addition was made by Mr. Wulff. The Guenthers, upon acquisition of the house, added a kitchenette and a screened porch on the main floor, and removed the partitions enclosing Mr. Wulff's office near the tower entrance, which was the main entrance to the house. Many interior changes and some additions have been made in and to the house with changes in use. A steel fire escape and an extraneous porch was added in the rear when the house was divided into four apartments in 1950. Interior changes consist primarily of improvised kitchens and baths to make the house suitable for multi-dwelling.

REFERENCES

With the Makers of San Antonio, by Fred Chabot, pp. 208-209, published by the Naylor Press.

Alluring San Antonio, by Lillie Mae Hagner, pp. 46-47, published by the Naylor Company, 1940.

San Antonio, by Charles Ramsdell, p. 156, published by the University of Texas Press, 1959.

Mrs. Leo M. J. (Wagener) Dielmann, 801 E. Guenther, San Antonio
Miss Regina Tyrrasch, grand-daughter, 736 South St. Mary's,
San Antonio.

Miss Isabel Wulff, daughter, 736 South St. Mary's, San Antonio.

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Bexar County Deed Records, 1868, Vol. 1, p. 110
Bexar County Probate Records, 1894 (will filed Sept. 6, 1894)
Bexar County Deed Records, 1902, Vol. 205, p. 495
Bexar County Deed Records, 1950, Vol. 2813, pp. 272, 279
Bexar County Deed Records, 1954, Vol. 3493, p. 18
Bexar County Deed Records, 1961, Vol. 4589, p. 358

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Character: The house consists of a three-story main rectangle 26' wide by 44' deep with pitched roof ending in gables front and back; a two-story rectangle 16' wide by 42' deep, breaking back at the front and back, with sloping shed roof, adjoining southwest wall of main rectangle; a four-story high 12' square tower with low pitched roof projecting near the middle of northeast wall of main rectangle; a 12' x 16' later addition to the two-story rectangle at west corner with deck roof; a two-story front porch with approach steps at south corner; a one-story porch at tower; a two-story porch in rear, now partially enclosed; porches are 6' to 7' wide. Lower floor is 3' below grade, except tower floor which is at grade level.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: 52' wide by 55' deep; porches are about 6' wide; screened porch addition is 7' to 8' wide.

Foundations: Continuous native limestone.

Wall Construction: 12" to 16" thick random ashlar stone, smooth face, projecting moulded voussoirs, flush lintels over square headed openings, ornamental engaged native stone columns and pilasters and belt courses near top of tower. All sills, rafters, girders and joists are yellow pine. Front wall under porches has been stuccoed.

Porch: Two-story front porch, supported by chamfered wood columns with cap, neck mould and base, and decorated with cut-out or "jig-saw" wood brackets, balustrade, dentiled wood cornice, 1" x 5" wood floors, 1x4 beaded ceiling, fleur-de-lis parapet ornaments and

metal deck roof; access stair to second level on south corner. Two-story rear porch, simpler, partially enclosed with wood siding; entrance porch to tower, one-story; all porch roofs are decked with metal.

Chimneys and Fireplaces: Fireplace and wood mantel on all floors in front center of main gable. Chimneys and flues with thimbles for wood stoves in other rooms.

Doorways and Doors: Deep reveal with wood jambs, back band trim inside and out; 2-panel doors with upper panel 3 or 4 light glass panels. Exterior doors are double doors, in opening, 8' and 9' high. Movable louvred out-opening shutters at all exterior doors.

Windows: 3/3 and 5/5 light casement sash, wood louvre shutters on exterior; some windows arched; tower sash fixed, glazed with leaded glass. Later west corner addition has 6/6 light double hung sash. All windows have exterior back band trim.

Roof: Main rectangle 4 in 12 pitch, gabled, standing seam metal; flat roof areas are also metal. Shed roof over two-story rectangle 4 in 12 pitch; 2 in 12 pitch roof on tower with weather vane at peak.

Cornice: Project about 1'-0" at eaves and gables, with wood corbels for support; tower cornice enclosed and projects about 9".

INTERIOR

Floor Plan: Three-story, irregular rectangular; first floor about 3'-0" below grade, except in tower, where it is at grade level. Ceiling height on lower story about 9'-0"; on main story about 13'-6"; and on upper story about 11'-8". Tower has no floor levels above main floor where stairway ends. A large room stretches across the front of main rectangle on all floors; this area served as Parlor and Master Bedroom on main and upper floors, respectively, and as the Dining Room on lower floor. The stair hall runs parallel to the front of the house and, emerges from the main rectangle into the four-story tower, being partially

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inside and partially outside the tower. There are four rooms on the main floor, but only two rooms and stair hall on upper floor; the space in two-story rectangle under shed roof on upper floor being less than normal ceiling height was used for storage. The lower floor contained a dining room, sewing room, kitchen, pantry, stair hall, servant's room and a small rumpus room. The main floor contained a parlor, sitting room, stair hall, two bedrooms and a bath. The tower on the upper floor has a ceiling about 20' high.

Flooring: Maple.

Stairway: Walnut; brought from New Orleans.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Plaster on masonry and on wood lath.

Doors: 3/3 panel double doors; some were glazed like the exterior doors, and on upper floors are 8' or more high.

Trim: 5" wide Classic back band, 1" x 7" moulded base, picture mould. Door jambs and window jambs are wood, but not paneled.

Partitions: Solid native stone on lower and main floors; wood stud on upper floors; plastered both sides.

Hardware: Exterior, wrought iron or white porcelain knobs, mortised locks on lower and main floors; rim locks with white porcelain knobs on upper floor.

Lighting: Originally, gas; now wired for electricity. A few of the original gas chandeliers remain.

OUTBUILDINGS

The original outbuildings, including the boat house, are gone; a latticed summer house in front yard remains.

SITE

The house faces southeast and located on spacious grounds on King William Street between Washington and South St. Mary's Street (formerly Garden Street) and backed up to the San Antonio

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River. Oak, pecan, mountain cedar, and other species of trees remain, but the garden with its brick-bordered gravel walks, flower beds, benches (all showing on old pictures) has been obliterated. A cast iron fence, about 3'-6" high, now borders the street line where the original horizontal wood paling fence stood. The street walk made with precast tinted diamond shaped cement blocks remains; so does the curved walk to the tower entrance, originally gravel, but changed to cement.

Prepared by,

Marvin Eickenroht

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